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Ref: Army/PolSec/E/A/FOI2025/00528

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4 February 2025

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 9 December 2024 in which you requested the following information:

*“Could you provide the latest figures available for the number of animals in the care of the armed forces and Ministry of Defence destroyed since 2015 together with the reasons for their destruction. I would like the figures broken down by year and animal.”*

In response to our request for clarification, you requested the following information on 8 January 2025:

*“I am referring to Military working animals and/or mascots.”*

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that some information in scope of your request is held.

Our records show that on 29 April 2022 and 25 February 2024 you submitted requests for the same information covering the 2015-2022 calendar years, which the Department complied with its responses of 8 June 2022 (reference FOI2022/05345) and 25 March 2024 (FOI2024/03366). The Department is therefore not obliged to comply with part of your current request under the terms of Section 14(2) of the FOIA.

The requested data for the 2023 calendar year for Military Working Dogs and Military Working Horses can be found below along with the requested data for mascots since 2015.

**Table 1. The number of Military Working Horses (MWHs) and Military Working Dogs (MWDs) euthanised in the 2023 calendar year.**

| Year | Euthanised |     |
|------|------------|-----|
|      | MWH        | MWD |

|      |    |    |
|------|----|----|
| 2023 | 14 | 18 |
|------|----|----|

**Table 2. A breakdown of Military Working Horses euthanised in the 2023 calendar year.**

|                | <b>Reasons for Euthanasia</b>                                   | <b>Medical Reason</b>          |
|----------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Data from 2023 | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Colic                          |
|                | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Colic                          |
|                | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Colic                          |
|                | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Lameness                       |
|                | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Lameness                       |
|                | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Lameness                       |
|                | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Lameness                       |
|                | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Lameness                       |
|                | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Infection                      |
|                | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Neurological                   |
|                | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Neurological                   |
|                | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Neoplasia                      |
|                | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Post-anaesthetic complications |
|                | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Foot penetration               |

**Table 3. A breakdown of Military Working Dogs euthanised in the 2023 calendar year.**

|  | <b>Reasons for Euthanasia</b>                                   | <b>Medical or Safety Reason</b>  |
|--|---|--|
| Data from 2023                           | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Neoplasia  |
|  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Neoplasia  |
|  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Neoplasia  |
|  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Neoplasia  |
|  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Neoplasia  |
|  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Neurological   |
|  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Neurological   |
|  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Neurological   |
|  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Neurological   |
|  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Urinary  |
|  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Severe arthritis, unable to be controlled with husbandry and analgesia |
|  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Severe arthritis, unable to be controlled with husbandry and analgesia |
|  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Severe arthritis, unable to be controlled with husbandry and analgesia |
|  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Severe arthritis, unable to be controlled with husbandry and analgesia |
| Euthanasia – Unacceptable Risk to Safety | Unacceptable risk to safety of handler or veterinary staff      |  |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | Euthanasia – Unacceptable Risk to Safety | Unacceptable risk to safety of handler or veterinary staff |
|  | Euthanasia – Unacceptable Risk to Safety | Unacceptable risk to safety of handler or veterinary staff |
|  | Euthanasia – Unacceptable Risk to Safety | Unacceptable risk to safety of handler or veterinary staff |

**Table 4. A breakdown of the number of mascots euthanised between the 2015-2023 calendar years.**

| Year | Mascots Euthanised |
|------|--------------------|
| 2015 | 0                  |
| 2016 | 0                  |
| 2017 | 2                  |
| 2018 | 0                  |
| 2019 | 0                  |
| 2020 | 0                  |
| 2021 | 0                  |
| 2022 | 0                  |
| 2023 | 0                  |

**Table 5. The veterinary reasons for mascots euthanised in 2017.**

|                | Animal | Reasons for Euthanasia  | Medical Reason      |
|----------------|--------|---|---------------------|
| Data from 2017 | Goat   | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Respiratory disease |
|                | Sheep  | Euthanasia – Veterinary condition causing unnecessary suffering | Kidney infection    |

**Notes/caveats to all tables**

- These figures are single Service estimates based on management information which is not gathered for statistical purposes or subject to the same level of scrutiny as official statistics produced by Defence Statistics. The figures provided may therefore be subject to data quality issues affecting their accuracy.

You may wish to be aware that Military Working Animals (MWA) are only ever euthanised to prevent their unnecessary suffering or because they pose an unacceptable risk to people. The decision to euthanise is always made by a registered veterinary surgeon, who is required to have taken into consideration each individual animal's specific health and welfare needs. The terms 'destroyed', or

'destruction' are not used professionally by the MOD as they are inaccurate to the treatment provided and lack compassion. These terms are not found in any MOD policy in relation to the care and veterinary treatment of valued and appreciated MWA. They in no way describe what happens to MWA, where it is necessary for their welfare or the safety of the people around them to humanely euthanise.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance. Following this, if you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

Equipment & Operations Team  
Army Policy & Secretariat